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ABSTRACT

Previous and present relationships between colleges and their communities are examined to determine the various forms of intervention, both social and economic, that will shape this relationship in the future. Four forms of community intervention are identified. (1) By its participation in college programs and services, the community is the primary determinant of institutional success. (2) Two-year colleges must rely on local and state support for their operating revenues. (3) College development can be influenced through community support on key financial issues. (4) College resources, staffing, and facilities depend on community-initiated legislation. These identifications lead to a series of recommendations that will need to be implemented if the challenge of community-based education is to be met successfully. (1) There must be an expansion of community involvement in the institutional decision making process. (2) Research and planning techniques must be applied to the assessment of community need for nontraditional programs. (3) Community-based pilot programs should be started in carefully selected off-campus locations. (4) Participative systems of management should be implemented in community learning centers. (5) Authority for control over decision making and policy making in the learning centers should be vested in the community. (NHM)

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COMMUNITY INTERVENTION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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June, 1975

In May of 1974, at a meeting of the College and University Council, representatives of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges described the two-year college as entering the "third major period" of its evolution; a new era in which the community college, as an "open college", will serve to create "value satisfying goods and services that consumers will want to buy." In time, it was proposed, community and junior colleges throughout the United States will exchange their "traditional" service concept for a new concept embodying the college as an educational resource for community and individual development. These unique institutions, regardless of their previous mission and performance, are to become colleges of the future, oriented to non-traditional operations within the community.

Later in 1974, at the third annual meeting of the AACJC Assembly, a theme was adopted for a new educational mission. That mission was to "provide an organization for national leadership of community-based, performance-oriented post-secondary education." Such education occurs, many believe, when a college and its entire staff join hands with the community and its agencies in order to assess

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human and educational needs, to identify potential clientele, to remove access barriers to human and educational services, to develop new avenues of access, to develop and implement curriculum and services, and to practically demonstrate accountability to the constituency.

By definition, this mission implies the exploration and development of all kinds of programs for all kinds of people. This will not be an easy task. There are many problems that stand in the way of the pursuit of community-based post-secondary education. For one, many colleges will experience difficulty in establishing effective working relationships with governing boards of other community educational and service agencies toward the objective of promoting cooperative planning and program implementation. Second, a significant number of faculty and administrators will be hesitant, at first, to accept the obvious logic of immersion into the community. This skepticism is healthy. Institutional efforts toward decentralization of educational programs and services cannot be accomplished solely on the basis of position papers and formal organizational statements. Careful planning and communication will be necessary before community-based education can become a reality.

Visions of the effects of various institutional steps in this direction tend to be somewhat heady. Some of the hard facts surrounding implementation of the new mission are the following:

> It is very likely that community-based programs, if they are to be successfully implemented, will require a revolution in the current structure of community college management systems. A product of conditions in the society and the economy, they will influence the direction of new

> legislation, they will antiquate existing organizational structures, and they may lead to a redistribution of resources among individual colleges. The result will be a new form of relationship between colleges and their communities based on concurrent trends of decentralization and shrinking support for college operations.

These are some of the facts that need to be faced by looking at the more important socioeconomic developments over the past ten years and assessing their impact on the community college.

A Thesis

The relationship of the two-year college with the community historically has been very important. Without satisfactory identification with the wide range of individuals, groups and agencies that make up the community, individual colleges would not have an accepted identity and purpose. For years administrators have experienced difficulty in determining an appropriate balance between the degree to which they should accommodate influences in the community and at the same time meet their institutional objectives. Adding to this difficulty, has been the recent surge in demand for new programs and services. Supplemental growth accompanied by stress on institutions to engender a philosophy of service to the community, can lead to dislocations in the educational program. This problem mandates research on models of intervention between college and community.

A laissez faire approach to relationships with the community is desirable in a flourishing economy. As conditions in the economy have changed, however, so too have the conditions for college involvement in the community. Community colleges, just as other institutions of higher education, now face a serious strain on institutional resources. Conditions in the economy dictate that we establish

"limits to growth" but this is not an easy task at a time when community needs demand an increasingly larger share of the institutional budget. The economy poses a powerful dilemma to faculty and administrators. If a satisfactory balance is not developed soon between economic realities and social needs, our colleges cannot hope to become community-based institutions.

It is the thesis of this paper that two-year colleges are involved in an organizational dilemma that is rooted in an inevitable tension between the requirement for decentralization on one hand and the concurrent demands on the organization for productivity and financial accountability on the other. This dilemma is not one of simple proportions; it amounts to a demand on the behalf of the community for colleges to effectively integrate both open and closed systems of management in their day to day operations.*

Two-year institutions, although they have readily adjusted to change in recent years, cannot be expected to meet this demand. A serious economic recession is at hand, our management systems are limited in scope, and our institutions do not have the flexibility to reconcile (in a stable organizational arrangement) the conflicting aims of open and closed systems. The task, therefore, is to examine previous and present relationships between colleges and their communities and to determine the various forms of intervention, both social and economic, that will shape this relationship in the future. The outcome is a series of recommendations that will need to be undertaken if the challenge of community education is to be successfully met.

*Used in this context, an "open" system of management is participatory in structure; a "closed" system is bureaucratic.

Community Intervention

Closely related to the development, progress and continuing operation of two-year colleges is the community power structure. In one way or another, various interest groups in the community "intervene" with the college along important checkpoints in its development. The forms of intervention are multiple:

1) By its response to college programs and services, the community is a primary determinant of institutional success (or failure) in accomplishing educational goals.

2) As institutions of the public trust, two-year colleges must rely on local and state support for their operating revenues; a community that does not fully utilize college programs and services can hamper institutional effectiveness, particularly if enrollment drops below a level sufficient to offset operating expenditures.

3) College development can be influenced through community support on key finance issues; a community that is reluctant to support bond and levy proposals can hinder institutional service to local needs.

4) College resources, staffing and facilities depend for their full accomplishment on community-initiated legislation; citizen membership on boards of trustees, program advisory committees and various ad hoc advisory groups is a key influence in the support of college programs.

Implicit in each of these forms is the notion that, although community intervention with individual colleges is virtually a day-to-day affair, community institutions exist, by nature, in a state of flux. Changes in community composition--be these changes political, economic, social or demographic--can cause shifts in the pattern of intervention. We know, for example, that changing population patterns can lead to redistribution in enrollment. We also know that a shift in economic conditions can affect the tax base of a two-year college. What we do not know is the various effects that changing social and economic conditions have on college

functioning and how these effects can influence the mission of the community college.

Two-year colleges are well embarked on a course of retrenchment in this decade. The growth years of the 1960's have become the decade of accountability in the 1970's. With the current economic recession and the pressures associated with non-traditional programs, we are on the verge of a new relationship with the community. Yet we do not seem to be fully aware of the effects this relationship may hold for our institutions. It is entirely possible that we will need to undertake sweeping reforms in our concept of management before making the plunge into community-based education. A brief review of the historical relationships between colleges and their communities will begin to show some of the reasons underlying this possibility.

Historical Roots

Community colleges have multiple roots. Historical developments such as the Morrill Act of 1862 authorizing land grant institutions; the bifurcated university movement at the turn of the century; the California Master Plan for higher education; and the development of comprehensive high schools, had a profound effect on two-year institutions. The trend toward equalization of access in American society has been an equally important influence. As massive federal assistance was made available to returning service personnel, to technical institutions, and to economically disadvantaged students, the inevitable result was an increase in demand for education beyond high school. The community colleges of today are largely a product of this demand.

Initially contrived by local communities as "safe" institutions in which students could economically obtain the advantages of advanced certification without exposure to the ravages or distractions of the youth culture, these colleges have grown rapidly in size and stature. At the turn of the century, there were only a few community college students. By 1960 more than 600,000 were enrolled and by 1969 their numbers had grown to almost two-million, including full-time and part-time students. Prebaccalaureate students now account for nearly 30 percent of all undergraduates and 25 percent of all college students in the nation.

During the decade of the 60's growth was not limited to enrollment alone. The number of colleges increased by 61 percent and the number of staff by 327 percent. Educational energies were exhausted in attempts to keep up with increasing numbers of students. New programs were launched; new facilities were located and constructed; and new structures were hastily planned to involve the community, the faculty, and the students in decision making. The excitement and the hopefulness that accompanied this decade was reflected in the actions of the community and agencies of state and local government. There was increasing committment to the concept of a partnership among state, locality, and students in sharing the operational costs of running a college, and the federal government, state and locality in sharing the costs of capital construction. As institutions grew in size and stature, local tax support increased proportionally and state finance formulas were adjusted to meeting shifting institutional needs. The result was a sequence of events that met or exceeded the growth

needs of community colleges and communicated their importance to a nation-wide audience.

Extensive change and intensive examination have marked the decade of the 70's. The growth trend has begun to level off, or at least, to slow down. Traditional programs, purposes and goals have been challenged, altered, and, in some instances, replaced. There are new constituencies and revitalized older ones.

The communities outside of colleges and the diverse groups within have come to express different means of reaching similar goals. The multiplicity of expectations and the plurality of value systems have resulted in a degree of indecisiveness among faculty and administrators about which goals to pursue. Furthermore, there is a widespread belief that increasing enrollments no longer constitute evidence of institutional effectiveness. Quality, from this point of view, does not depend on the number of students, on the diversity of programs, or on the expansiveness of facilities, but on the ability of the staff and on the outputs of education.

Complicating the task of the 70's has been the financial crisis that has befallen our institutions. Faced with reductions in federal appropriations, financial stringency in many of the states, and increasing reluctance of voters to approve additional taxes, broader financial support will be necessary to maintain or increase the level of existing programs. This has led to an appeal for state agencies to assume a larger share of the responsibility for financing two-year colleges.

Deleterious side effects have been associated with this appeal.

Experience has shown that as state support for higher education has increased, so too has the pressure for accountability. Accountability is a constructive process for institutions accustomed to a meritocratic style of operation but two-year colleges do not employ this style. They are non-traditional in both the program and operational sectors and require non-traditional measures to profit from state systems of control. The insensitivity of many agencies to this need casts into doubt the effect of increased state support without corresponding adjustments in the formulas for resource allocation. The short-term effect will undoubtedly be a "shot in the arm" but the long-term effect--with the strings of "traditional" accountability systems attached--is open to question.

The Current Outlook

Throughout the historical development of community colleges, a unifying thread has been the structure of institutional management systems. The economy has undergone a dramatic transition and community value systems have changed, but the management process continues in a bureaucratic mold. Drawn in part from the comprehensive secondary schools as well as business and industry, the bureaucratic conception of management has prevailed since the early 1900's. The primary focus of this type of management is on unity of command. The pyramidal structure, typical of the bureaucratic model, is designed to insure that the greatest influence over people, information and procedures is exercised by those who operate at the top of the structure. Each individual reports to only one other in the chain of command. The organization is relatively inflexible since specialization is carefully controlled in both the line and staff dimensions

to avoid overlap wherever possible. This concentration of authority and decision making can create a gap between organizational demands and community needs which grows wider as socioeconomic conditions change within the community. Within organizations that subscribe this model, the various control mechanisms impede communication and consequently limit effectiveness in solving problems related to the initiation of change.

In the 70's, however, an unusual combination of social and economic conditions mandates that two-year institutions develop management systems that are responsive to the needs of their communities. Many questions challenge our colleges: What structural arrangements shall obtain in the relationship between institution and community? What are the social and economic conditions that underlie this relationship? How will subgroups within and outside of the college react to changing social conditions? What is the relationship between community-based education and social change? What are the implications of this relationship for institutional management systems? Solutions to these questions will be necessary before faculty and administrators can be expected to give full support to the concept of community-based education.

To say that this is a challenging new era for two-year colleges is an understatement.The era of "zero growth" that was forecast in the early 1970's has become instead the era of "new growth." Enrollments have not dried up as predicted, resources have tightened more quickly than expected, and the demand for community education has outstripped the most ambitious dreams of faculty and administrators. The challenge is perhaps best understood in terms of a dynamic social relationship between colleges and their communities. The proliferation of demand and the related cleavages in local, state

and federal support have led to a crisis of control. Increasingly various groups in the community have come to advocate new goals that community colleges should serve. This coupled with striking recent changes in the economy, has led to the emergence of the community as a determining force in college operations. Control can be exercised through withholding of financial support or non-participation in college programs. The power to enhance or to constrain institutional functioning no longer rests with the college but is now in the hands of the local citizenry.

Many institutions have failed to recognize this development. Faculty and administrators have come to believe that the relationship between higher education and society will always adhere to the arc of a swinging pendulum; if conditions turn bad, improvements are bound to occur because society cannot afford to tarnish its investment in education. We continue to invest heavily in new programs under the belief that growing enrollments will force state agencies to incrase financial support and that the gap between community demand and support, while it will continue to expand, will do so at a decelerating rate. We continue in the belief that community demands for accountability will eventually soften or perhaps even disappear. We continue to believe that our colleges will be able to sustain a pattern of growth even though four-year colleges are experimenting with career programs and private institutions are receiving increased financial support.

These are dangerous beliefs on which to base programmatic and staff decisions. As community-oriented institutions, two-year colleges are uniquely qualified to provide leadership to the public

on better ways to live. Yet, our institutions have become the victims of a shifting economy instead of the precursors of economic change. They are the institutions of community will, but experience difficulty in creating a working balance between educational demands and citizen support. With conditions in the economy gradually worsening, it is possible that community groups may seek greater control over institutional operations and thus push community-based education to the forefront of the college program. A brief look at the condition of the economy and the response of municipal and state agencies to prevailing trends will show why this is possible.

The characteristics of a recessionary economy are the following:

* high unemployment,
* strong union control over labor negotiations and standards of employment,
* rapid rise in the cost of living,
* drop in industrial production and inventory,
* shifting patterns of expenditures,
* investment in the money market, and
* increasing unit cost of durable and non-durable goods

The rise of a complex and interdependent economy has been fundamental to the growth and development of American society. Mechanization has created a society rich in material goods but it has also created a labor force which faces new and perplexing problems. Chief among these is the problem of the worker displaced by changes in production. A fully automated economy must operate at peak levels of productivity and worker efficiency to meet consumer demand. A recession has the effect of forcing a curtailment in production and a cutback in employment. This is a problem that

must be borne by the labor force and is reflected in the hard core of unemployment that has plagued local communities for the past six months.

The recession is inexorably linked to the welfare of the community and the well-being of two-year colleges. In the face of economic gloom, communities have begun to tighten the pursestrings on local tax support. The financial squeeze is not limited to "salting away" the local tax base--it also extends into the broad sector of college operations. At a time of need, local communities have sought to obtain the advantages of expanded services at lower cost. The evidence of this trend is ample as communities have been observed to:

* partake of two-year programs and services at a rate greater than before because of the obvious advantage of using institutional resources to contribute directly toward personal goals.

* seek greater relevance in the educational program to areas of community interest such as job retention, leisure time use, consumer economics and community renewal.

* enroll in non-traditional programs to obtain training without exposure to the rigors of "traditional" programs.

* place emphasis on the need for stronger standards of accountability among faculty and administrators.

* strive for greater control in college decision making through service on boards of control, lay advisory committees, citizens' councils, and ad hoc advisory committees.

* facilitate citizen access to institutional resources through relocation of college programs into the community.

Community colleges depend primarily on community and state support for their operating revenues. These sources are particularly important when community pressures for non-traditional programs are on the rise and additional resources are necessary to meet additional demands. Recent trends, however, indicate that

state agencies are beginning to reassess their position with regard to institutional support. Some of the signs that mark this development are the following:

* legislative agencies have sought greater control over college operations through efforts to "freeze" at an existing level, support to community colleges.

* agencies of state government have hindered the development of non-traditional programs through limiting financial support to credit bearing courses pursued by full-time equivalent students.

* resolutions havebeen introduced in many states that call for two-year colleges to limit the number of tenured faculty employed in any given year to a figure not in excess of a specified base enrollment.

* state agencies have attempted to conserve diminishing resources by cutting back on funds available for special college projects.

* summary accounts of legislative activity reveal a lack of committment in many states to financing of capital construction projects in community colleges.

* state master plan recommendations limit the possibility of increasing state support because of enrollment forecasts based on "traditional" student definitions.

If the trends postulated above have in fact come about, adjustments will need to be made to effect a change from a pattern of control based upon rigorous adherence to a uniform philosophy with established decision making procedures, to a pattern based upon the balancing and integration of competing interests. When one considers the situation that could potentially be presented to colleges if community-based education runs its full course without corresponding adjustments in state finance formulas, there is cause for concern. Community pressures for growth, modified by economic recession, result in added structural complexity. Complexity leads to specialization and differentiation

of function as two-year colleges attempt to implement community-based programs. Given this tendency, problems of structural growth merge into problems of structural change when financial resources for non-traditional programs are restricted at their sourcepoint.

Management personnel will need to carefully coordinate the move toward decentralization with trends in the economy and community. The very fabric of college management systems is directly dependent on community and state support being maintained and increased in the changing world of curriculum, organizational patterns, and community structure. When opportunities are not available for colleges to adapt to changes in the economy and society through increased financial support, the result is one of a crisis in ability to meet community needs. The implication, in the final analysis, is a need for reform in the structure of institutional management systems. Unless our colleges emerge from or evolve into total community systems and cultivate a better financial base, the dream of community-based education may never become a reality. Required are systems of management that place a premium upon concepts of shared authority and mutual accountability. Colleges that operationalize an organizational structure based on these concepts are pliable and able to respond to changes in society which coincide with new conditions or needs in the community.

The Road to Reform

It seems in the nature of a moral imperative that community colleges be responsive to the educational needs of their taxpayer constituencies. Yet the educational interests of citizens are seldom considered in the deliberations of academic senates, curriculum committees, and institutional planning groups. On too many

occasions, off-campus citizens are not aware of the full thrust of college programs. They seek greater involvement in the educational enterprise--one means is through relocation of institutional operations into the community. This should not be an arbitrary undertaking but should be accomplished through a stepwise process of articulation between college and community.

In the typical community situation, various interest groups exert pressures on local institutions to start up programs in off-campus locations. The college response is often one of agreement to undergo the task without first looking into the long-term consequences or financial realities of such an investment. Complicating the situation, is the value perspective of administrators that community groups, whatever the state of the economy, are best served through bureaucratic systems of management. There is a tendency to force an uncomfortable alliance between two different worlds--one an open system made up of decentralized operations and the other a closed system comprised of centralized decision making processes. The outcome is a harmful loss of focus in the educational program.

In a recessionary economy, it is not in the best interest of management to stretch a wide base of institutional operations against a narrow base of community financial support. As community demands for non-traditional programs expand, two-year colleges will have to face the problem of developing delivery systems that can readily adjust to changing conditions in the economy and community. Although control in the educational enterprise is traditionally established through legislation, conditions in the economy could prompt increasing numbers of community inhabitants to return to college and

to pressure colleges to quickly decentralize much of the educational program. The result will be a harmful loss of control and a weakened financial condition for many institutions.

To avert this dilemma it is suggested that faculty and administrators undertake critical reforms in management prior to the implementation of community-based educational programs. A progressive approach is recommended. The phases in this progression are the following:

Phase One Reaffirmation of Existing College-Community Relationships

Method: Expansion of community involvement in the institutional decision making process

Procedures:

* specify and strengthen the role of boards of trustees in the legislative function (policy making function) of the college.
* involve the community in a systematic program of assessment to determine the need for relocation of college programs and services.
* appoint and utilize a "citizens advisory council" to assist management personnel in identifying key issues facing the college as well as appropriate decision making processes to resolve these issues.
* expand the function of program advisory committees to include responsibilities for establishment, evaluation, and modification of programs in the college.
* establish "functional advisory committees" comprised of community experts in every phase of college operations (i.e., media, manpower training, federal affairs, public relations, institutional planning, etc.) to guide college personnel in relationships with the community.

The goal of this phase will be to strengthen college-community relations in areas where they traditionally have been weak such as needs assessment, educational planning, and involvement in decision making.

Phase Two Institutional Planning for Community-Based Programs

Method: Application of research and planning techniques to assessment of community need for non-traditional programs

Procedures:
* identify clientele for community-based programs through collection of information pertinent to characteristics of the regional census population.
* conduct a systematic program of needs assessment to determine instructional needs of citizens.
* examine trends in state and local support for non-traditional programs and develop alternative financial strategies.
* evaluate staff potential for participation in community-based programs and initiate professional development programs.
* locate temporary facilities and evaluate their utility through cost-benefit techniques.
* establish a master plan for implementation of community-based programs.

In this phase, the total structure of community educational needs will be examined in context with available resources (financial, facilities and manpower) and a master plan developed for implementation of a community-based educational Program.

Phase Three Establishment of Community-Based Programs

Method: Start-up pilot programs in carefully selected off-campus locations

Procedures:
* budget and staff an autonomous network of community learning centers.
* employ centralized systems of management but involve the community in decision making related to the instructional program, budget, staff, and facilities.
* examine information related to vital signs of institutional functioning and developing alternative approaches to learning center management.

A community-based program will be established as part of this phase and systems of research, planning and governance implemented that will involve the community in center operations.

Phase Four Transfer of Control from College to Community

Method: Implementation of participative systems of management in community learning centers.

Procedures:
* delegate authority to the community for decision making on all matters related to institutional functioning.
* retain the policy making function at the central campus until such time as learning center management systems are operational.
* encourage functional and structural autonomy among units within the network of learning centers.

The objective of this phase will be to decentralize functional aspects of institutional management to the community and to foster complete community control over the operation and governance of the center.

Phase Five Implementation of a "Total Community" System of Management

Method: Vest authority in the community for control over decision making and policy making functions in the learning centers.

Procedures:
* develop channels of communication for transmittal of community-based decisions to the central campus.
* foster a division of labor between the central campus and learning centers based on centralization of specialized support services and decentralization of executive management.

The community will assume and actively discharge functions of policy making and operational control vis-a-vis activities of the center following this phase of the decentralization process.

If community colleges are to serve the needs of the community, they need to implement community-based management systems. This millenium is not likely to overwhelm us by the 1980's. For one thing, there is the matter of providing the substantial investment in institutional research and planning that will be necessary to accomplish change. There is also the matter of the braking of progress that can be forthcoming from faculty if they are not thoroughly attuned to the goals of community-based education. Activity on these two fronts will be essential to the health of two-year colleges in their relationships with the community. Failure to recognize their importance for the implementation of change in the educational process will result in the premature termination of a promising new partnership for education and society.

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